code 214 to all registered identification codes contained in the table 216. In the absence of a match between the instant identification code and any registered identification code, the controller 54 updates the table, i.e., the controller registers the instant identification code by adding it to the table 216. Upon registering the usage key card 202, the controller 54 also enables use of generator 38 in association with the device.

The presence of a match between the instant identification code and any registered identification code indicates the usage key card 202 has been previously read by the module 48, which reflects a prior use of the device 26 or another device not packaged with the card 202. In this circumstance, the controller 54 does not add the duplicative identification code to the table 216 and does not enable use of the generator 38 in association with any device 26. Preferably, the controller 54 outputs to the GUI notice of prior use.

In an alternative arrangement, the controller 54 maintains for each registered identification code in the table 216 a time record 218. The time record 218 contains a value reflecting the period of time during which energy was applied by the generator 38 during the previous permitted use. In this embodiment, when a match occurs between the instant identification code and a registered identification code, the controller 54 ascertains whether the time period of previous use contained in the record 218 is less than a

prescribed maximum time period, e.g., 45 minutes. If so, the controller 54 enables a subsequent operation of the generator 38 in association with the device 26, but only for the time period remaining. The controller 54 updates the time record 218 as further use occurs. The controller 54 preferably outputs to the GUI the time period of permitted use remaining.

If the controller 54 ascertains that the time period of previous use equals or exceeds the prescribed maximum time period, the controller 54 does not enable use of the generator 38. Preferably, the controller 54 outputs to the GUI notice of prior use.

As Fig. 9 shows, the second file 212 contained on the storage medium 204 of the usage key card 202 is formatted to receive, via the module 48, data that is generated by the controller 54 during permitted use of the device 26 in association with the generator 38. The file 212 retains the data in a formatted array according to pre-programmed rules to create a procedure log 220.

The content of the formatted log 220 can vary. For example, the log 220 can document, by date of treatment and number of treatments, the coagulation level (i.e., the depth at which the electrodes are inserted), the time duration of energy application, the magnitude of energy delivered by each electrode, and the coolant flow rate. The procedure log 220 can also record at pre-established intervals (e.g., every 5 seconds) the temperatures of the electrodes and surrounding

tissue, along other parameters, e.g., sensed impedance and power delivered by each electrode.

The procedure log 220 preferably records these values in a pre-formatted data base format, to enable import of the values as data base items for storage, processing, and retrieval by an off-line data processing device 222 having a compatible data base processing application. The off-line data processing device 222 reads processing log data from the usage key card 202 (via a floppy disk drive 230 or otherwise compatible reading device).

The device 222 can process the data in various ways according to the rules of the data processing application. The device 222 can, e.g., create a print-formatted record of the procedure log 220 for printing in a hard copy version. The device 222 can also, e.g., process the procedure logs for multiple devices and patients, to create historical patient treatment records, patient reimbursement records, and the like for storage or retrieval. The device 222 thereby makes possible the establishment and maintenance of an archival patient data base by processing individual procedure logs.

As Fig. 6 shows, the kit 200 can also include a label 224 that is pre-applied or that can be applied by the physician to the usage key card 202. The label 224 receives manually transcribed, visually readable information pertaining to the usage key card 202, e.g., the name of the patient being treated by the device 26, the date of treatment, and the like. In this way, usage key cards 202 can itself be physically stored and